

Back to action

1st Med. Bde. gets troops right to fight

Spc. Michael R. Noggle

Third U.S. Army PAO/11th PAD

As an infantry Soldier with the 101st Airborne Division, Spc. Jameson Smith recalls the incident like a fresh nightmare after watching a scary movie.

Sweeping through an Iraqi home, Smith, pulling guard in his sector, watched as a rocket-propelled grenade rushed in his direction.

"I was scared," he said. "I stepped back into the doorway... luckily, it only grazed my leg."

Smith received immediate surgery in Tikrit. However, he needed to be medically evacuated elsewhere for recovery.

With limited capabilities for servicemembers to rehabilitate throughout the U.S. Central Command area of operation, Smith was sent to Camp Arifjan, home of the only Theater Transient Hold Detachment.

Managed by the 1st Medical Brigade, the TTHD ensures that U.S. and Coalition Forces no longer have to be sent to Germany for medical treatment allowing personnel to return to duty within 30 days.

"We're keeping the individuals as far forward as possible... closer to the fight," said Maj. John Miller, TTHD officer in charge. "Keep them acclimated to the weather and return them as soon as possible to their units."

Since Dec. 1, Miller and his team have received more than 500 uniformed personnel and have returned 70 percent back to their units. With four staff members on-call 24/7, incoming personnel receive billeting transportation, administrative attention and other accommodations.

They also have to remain in contact with the servicemember's unit, to update condition and return date.

"We try to do the right thing for the right reasons," he said. "We take in servicemembers who have the potential to heal within 30 days."

For some servicemembers, this is the best place in theater for rehabilitation.

Marine Lance Cpl. Andy Vistrand said the water sanitation was questionable at his location in Iraq. Recovering from a torn meniscus, doctors were concerned

bacteria would get in his stitches, causing infection.

Spc. Jameson Smith

"The facilities are clean and habitable," Smith said. "Having running water and toilets are a nice change from what we had in Samarra."

To accommodate those on crutches, ramps were installed at nearby latrine facilities for easier access and dayrooms placed in each building. Staff members or other transients make trips to the dining facility or Post Exchange for those with limited movement.

"I like the camaraderie we have going on in there," Vistrand said. "They don't have to do it, but they do. I like that about the military - take care of your own."

"Anything I need, these guys will go out of their way and get it for me," Smith said. "The staff and everyone else have been very helpful."

Since their arrival to the TTHD, Vistrand and Smith have shared that friendship with one another and others waiting to go through rehabilitation. They share their stories, but never complain of their situations.

"We try to get them to open up," said Staff Sgt. Suren Jiwa,



Sgt. Michael R. Noggle

Sgt. Lanee Smith sits alone in her living quarters reading a novel. Smith is recovering from an injury she received in Afghanistan.

detachment noncommissioned officer. "We want them to feel comfortable being here and let them know we are here for them."

For now, the servicemembers continue to bond with one another as they await their time to rejoin their units.

"I was glad they were able to do everything here," he said. "I didn't want to go to Germany

and this location keeps us relatively close to our units."

"I feel this has been a success," Miller said. "I have talked to numerous commanders and they are grateful that we have this capability."

Note: For clothing or entertainment donations to servicemembers at the TTHD, contact Staff Sgt. Frederick Foster at DSN 430-7489.